

inserting the spline element into a groove of each panel of the row of panels; and  
securing the spline element to the series of joists to connect each panel to the deck frame.

43. (amended) A method of building a deck structure comprising the steps of:

providing a deck frame including a series of joists;

providing a plurality of modular panels, each panel being of a layered construction including a top element and a bottom element, said top element being of a material providing substantial compressive strength and limited tensile strength, said bottom element being of a fiber-reinforced material, each panel having at least one groove;

providing a plurality of panel support elements;

attaching the plurality of panel support elements to the series of joists;

providing a spline element;

placing a series of panels upon the plurality of panel support elements;

inserting the spline element into a groove of each of the panels; and

securing the spline element to the series of joists to connect the plurality of panels to the deck frame.